538

FANTASTIC FOUR®

A MARVEL® COMICS EVENT

CIVIL WAR™

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DIRECT EDITION

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STRACZYNSKI

MCKONE

Mr. Fantastic. The Invisible Woman. The Human Torch. The Thing.
A team--and a family--of adventurers, explorers and imaginauts, the Fantastic Four lead lives both ordinary--and extraordinary.

Fantastic Four

PREVIOUSLY IN CIVIL WAR...

Hoping to boost their ratings, four New Warriors--young super heroes and reality television stars--attempt to apprehend a quartet of villains holed up in Stamford, Connecticut. When confronted, the explosive Nitro employs his self-detonation ability, blowing the New Warriors and a large chunk of Stamford into oblivion. The entire incident is caught on tape. Casualties number in the hundreds.

As a reaction to this tragedy, public sentiment is turning against super heroes. Johnny Storm, the Human Torch, is attacked outside a nightclub and beaten into a coma. On Capitol Hill, a Superhuman Registration Act is debated which would require all those possessing paranormal abilities to register with the government, divulging their true identities to the authorities and submitting to training and sanctioning in the manner of federal agents.

Some heroes, such as Iron Man, see this as a natural evolution of the role of super heroes in society, and a reasonable request. Others, embodied by Captain America, take umbrage at this assault on their civil liberties.

When Captain America is called upon to hunt down his fellow heroes who are in defiance of the Registration Act, he chooses to go AWOL, becoming a public enemy in the process. Meanwhile, Reed Richards has chosen a definite side for the Fantastic Four, as he teams up with Iron Man and Yellowjacket to bring Cap and other unregistered heroes to the ground.

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THE KEY THING, IF HE WAKES UP--
WHEN HE WAKES UP--
--IS THAT HE SHOULD BE EASED INTO CONSCIOUSNESS. NO SUDDEN ACTIONS OR VIOLENT, NEGATIVE EMOTIONS, NOTHING THAT COULD UPSET HIM--
SO HOW COME YER ALL LOOKIN' AT ME WHEN HE'S SAYIN' THAT?
LINE OF SIGHT, BEN, THAT'S ALL.

Street fighting

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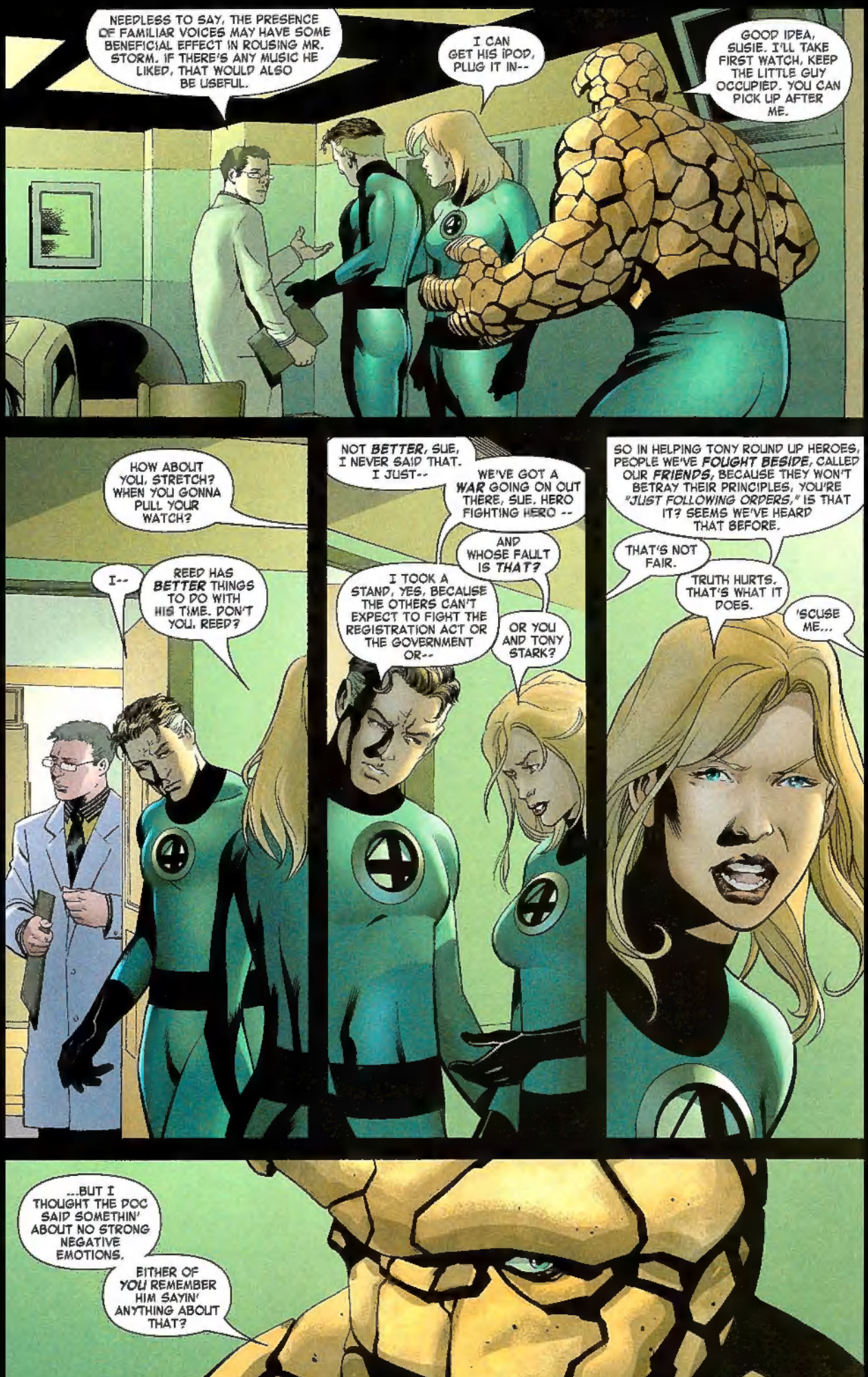
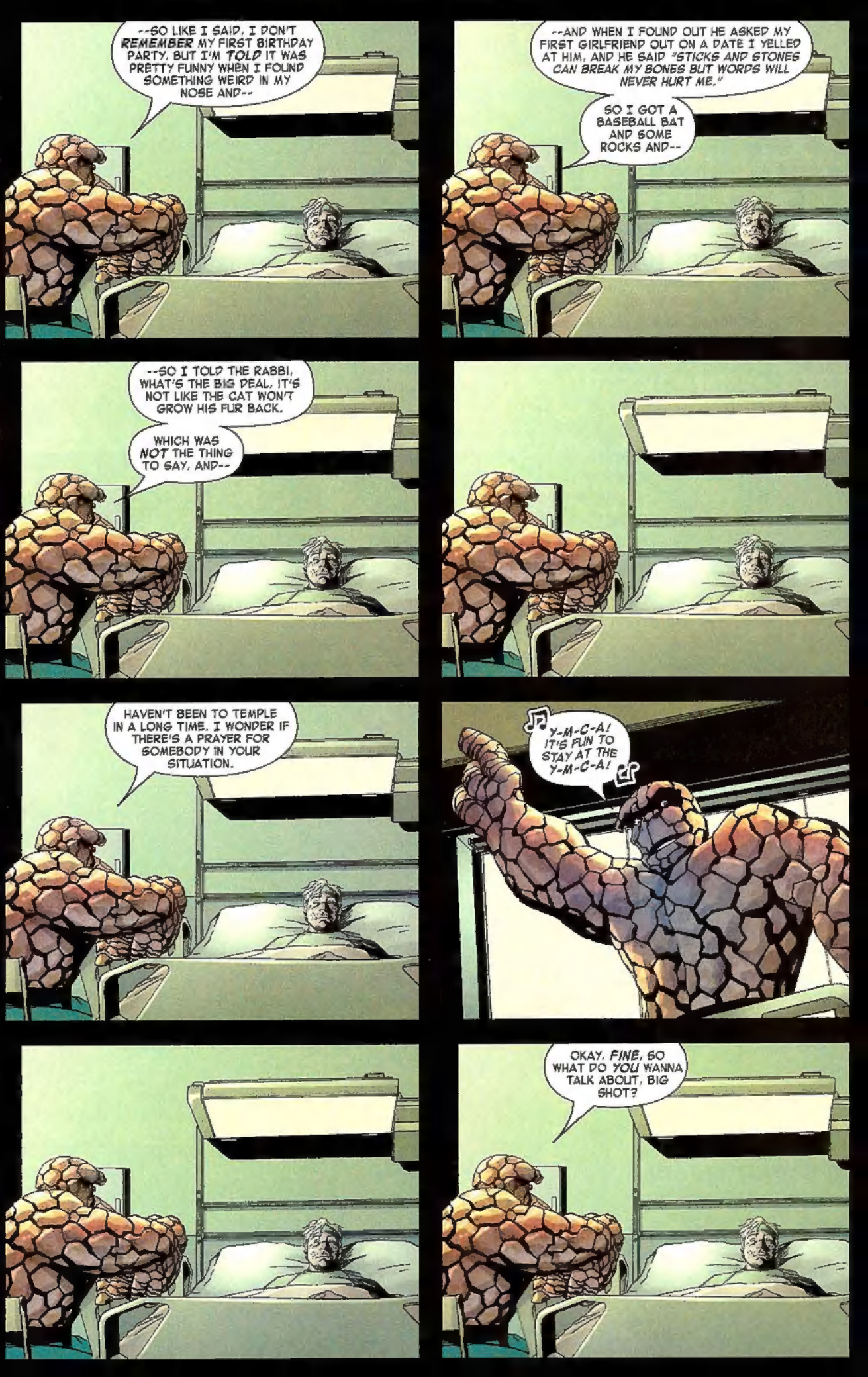
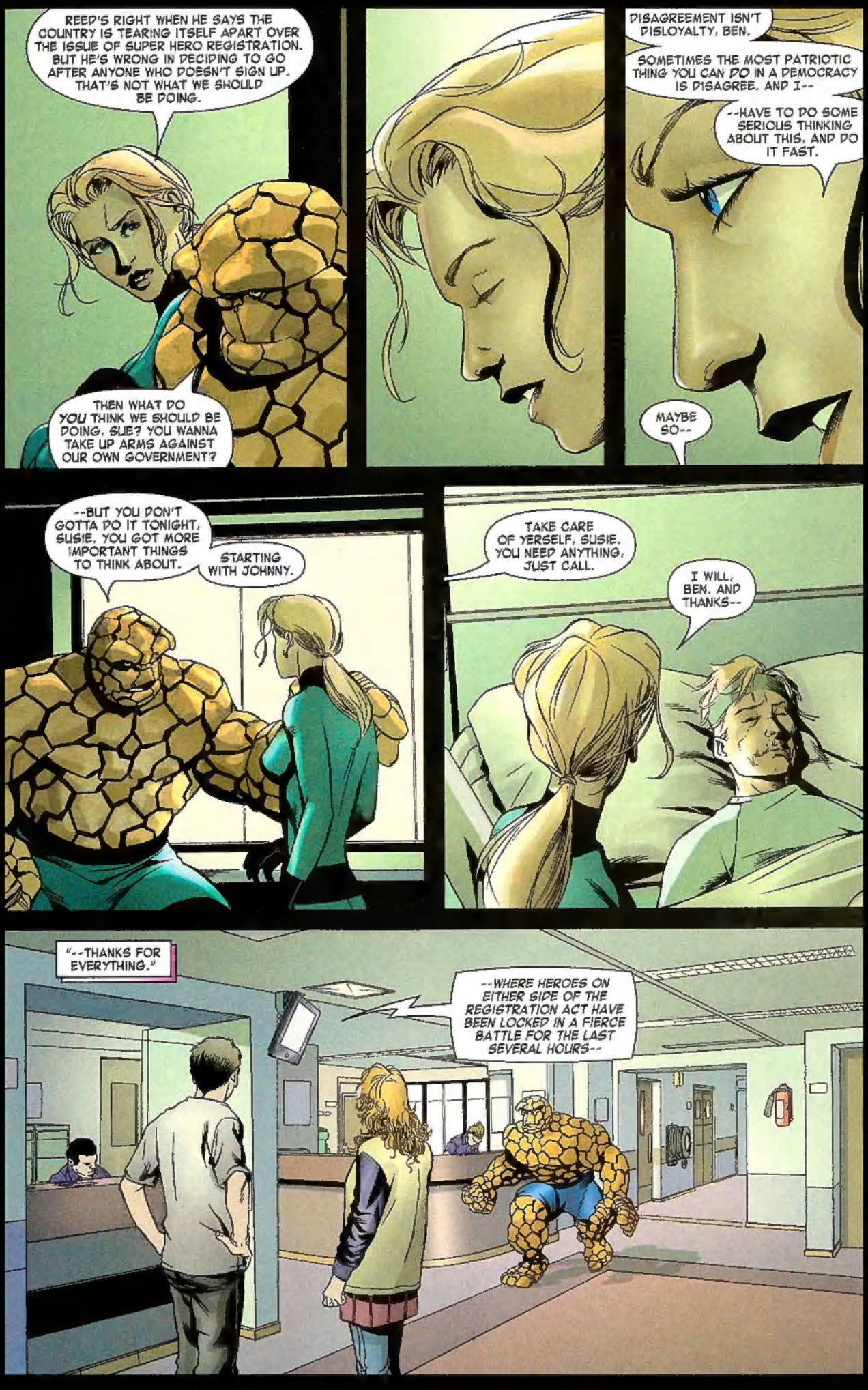

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE PRESENCE OF FAMILIAR VOICES MAY HAVE SOME BENEFICIAL EFFECT IN ROUSING MR. STORM. IF THERE'S ANY MUSIC HE LIKED, THAT WOULD ALSO BE USEFUL.
I CAN GET HIS IPOD, PLUG IT IN--
GOOD IDEA, SUSIE. I'LL TAKE FIRST WATCH, KEEP THE LITTLE GUY OCCUPIED. YOU CAN PICK UP AFTER ME.
HOW ABOUT YOU, STRETCH? WHEN YOU GONNA PULL YOUR WATCH?
I--
REED HAS *BETTER* THINGS TO DO WITH HIS TIME. DON'T YOU, REED?
NOT *BETTER*, SUE, I NEVER SAID THAT. I JUST--
WE'VE GOT A *WAR* GOING ON OUT THERE, SUE. HERO FIGHTING HERO --
AND WHOSE FAULT IS *THAT?*
I TOOK A STAND, YES, BECAUSE THE OTHERS CAN'T EXPECT TO FIGHT THE REGISTRATION ACT OR THE GOVERNMENT OR--
OR YOU AND TONY STARK?
SO IN HELPING TONY ROUND UP HEROES, PEOPLE WE'VE *FOUGHT BESIDE*, CALLED OUR *FRIENDS*, BECAUSE THEY WON'T BETRAY THEIR PRINCIPLES, YOU'RE *"JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS,"* IS THAT IT? SEEMS WE'VE HEARD THAT BEFORE.
THAT'S NOT FAIR.
TRUTH HURTS. THAT'S WHAT IT DOES.
'SCUSE ME...
...BUT I THOUGHT THE DOC SAID SOMETHIN' ABOUT NO STRONG NEGATIVE EMOTIONS.
EITHER OF *YOU* REMEMBER HIM SAYIN' ANYTHING ABOUT THAT?

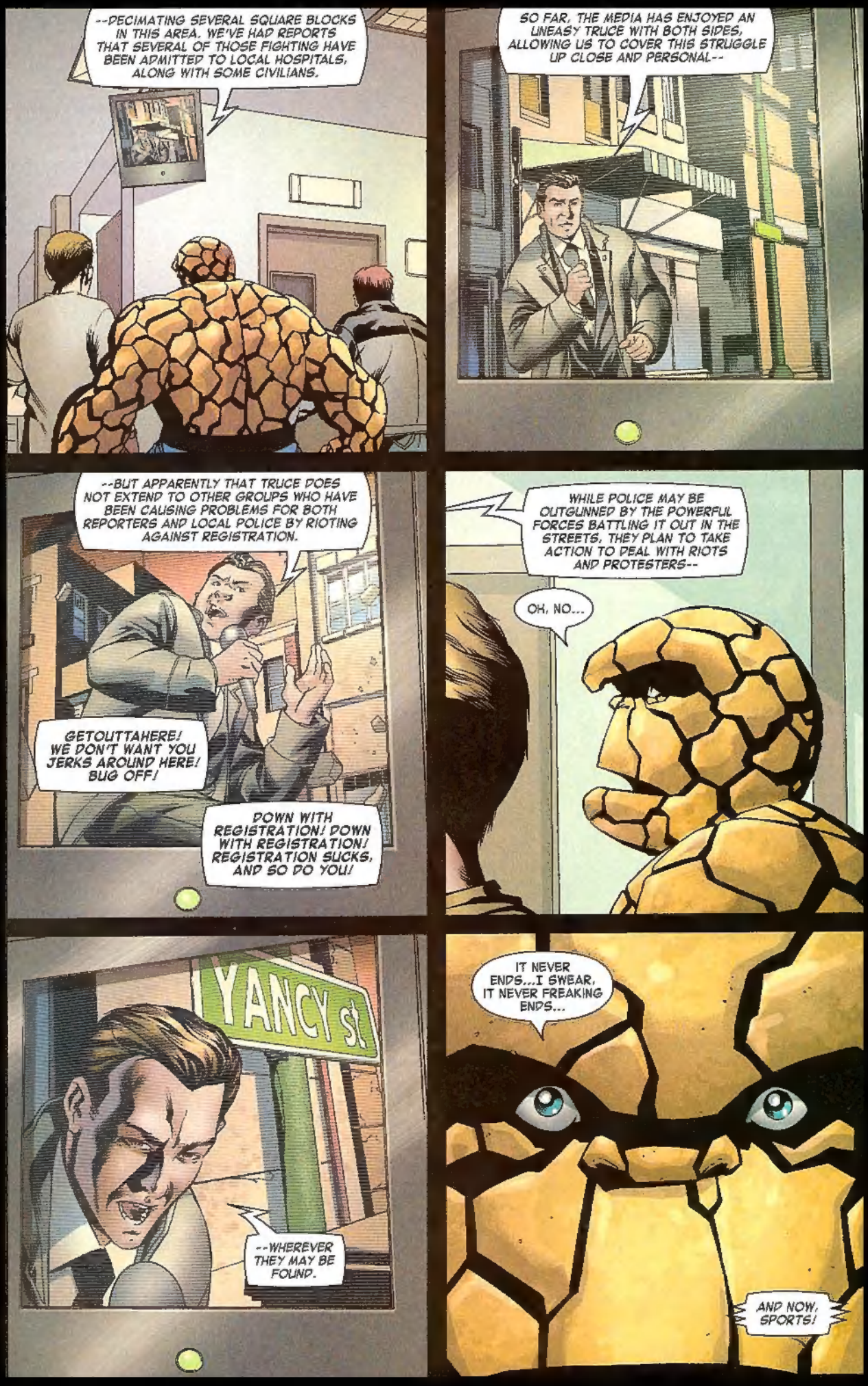
WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS LATER, SUE.
BEN, I COULD USE YOUR HELP TO ROUND UP THESE PEOPLE.
I DON'T THINK BEN'S INTERESTED.
BEN CAN SPEAK FOR HIMSELF. HE HAS THE SAME BENEFIT WE DO. OUR IDENTITIES ARE *ALREADY* PUBLIC. HE HAS NOTHING TO LOSE, AND NOTHING AT STAKE.
STRETCH, MAYBE YA MISSED IT. BUT I'M STILL AN AMERICAN. I HAVE AS MUCH AT STAKE IF THIS COUNTRY TEARS ITSELF APART AS ANYBODY ELSE. SO I THINK--
--I THINK YOU *BOTH* BETTER GET OUTTA HERE AND COOL OFF BEFORE SOMEBODY SAYS SOMETHIN' THAT CAN'T BE UNSAID.
OKAY KID, SO WHADDYA WANT TA TALK ABOUT?
ME? OH, NO, I COULDN'T, I--
WELL, YEAH, I *AM* THE MOST INTERESTING THING IN THE ROOM, PUN INTENDED, BUT--
OKAY, YA TALKED ME INTO IT.


--SO LIKE I SAID, I DON'T REMEMBER MY FIRST BIRTHDAY PARTY, BUT I'M TOLD IT WAS PRETTY FUNNY WHEN I FOUND SOMETHING WEIRD IN MY NOSE AND--
--AND WHEN I FOUND OUT HE ASKED MY FIRST GIRLFRIEND OUT ON A DATE I YELLED AT HIM, AND HE SAID "STICKS AND STONES CAN BREAK MY BONES BUT WORDS WILL NEVER HURT ME."
SO I GOT A BASEBALL BAT AND SOME ROCKS AND--
--SO I TOLD THE RABBI, WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL, IT'S NOT LIKE THE CAT WON'T GROW HIS FUR BACK.
WHICH WAS NOT THE THING TO SAY, AND--
HAVEN'T BEEN TO TEMPLE IN A LONG TIME. I WONDER IF THERE'S A PRAYER FOR SOMEBODY IN YOUR SITUATION.
Y-M-C-A! IT'S FUN TO STAY AT THE Y-M-C-A!
OKAY, FINE, SO WHAT DO YOU WANNA TALK ABOUT, BIG SHOT?

'CAUSE I GOT NOTHIN'.
WELL, I GOT AN UPDATE FROM STRETCH ABOUT THAT BUSINESS IN OKLAHOMA.
"ONCE WORD GOT OUT THAT THOR'S HAMMER WAS DOWN THERE, EVERY TWO-BIT STRONG MAN, HERO, BAD GUY AND WEASEL FOR A THOUSAND MILES IN ANY DIRECTION WENT DOWN THERE TO SEE IF THEY COULD PICK IT UP. THE GOVERNMENT GAVE UP TRYIN' TO STOP 'EM AFTER A WHILE.
"SO FAR, NADA. ONLY GUY WHO'S MADE ANYTHING OFF THE DEAL IS THIS DOCTOR WHO SET UP CAMP OUTSIDE. SPECIALIZES IN HERNIAS.
I'M GETTIN' IT, I'M GETTIN' IT, I --
--OW-- OWOWOW OWOW--
MEDIC!
NEXT!
"IT'S LIKE WHEN THAT HAMMER FELL, IT TILTED THE WHOLE COUNTRY TOWARD OKLAHOMA--
"--AND ANYTHING THAT'S NOT NAILED DOWN IS ROLLING RIGHT TOWARD IT."

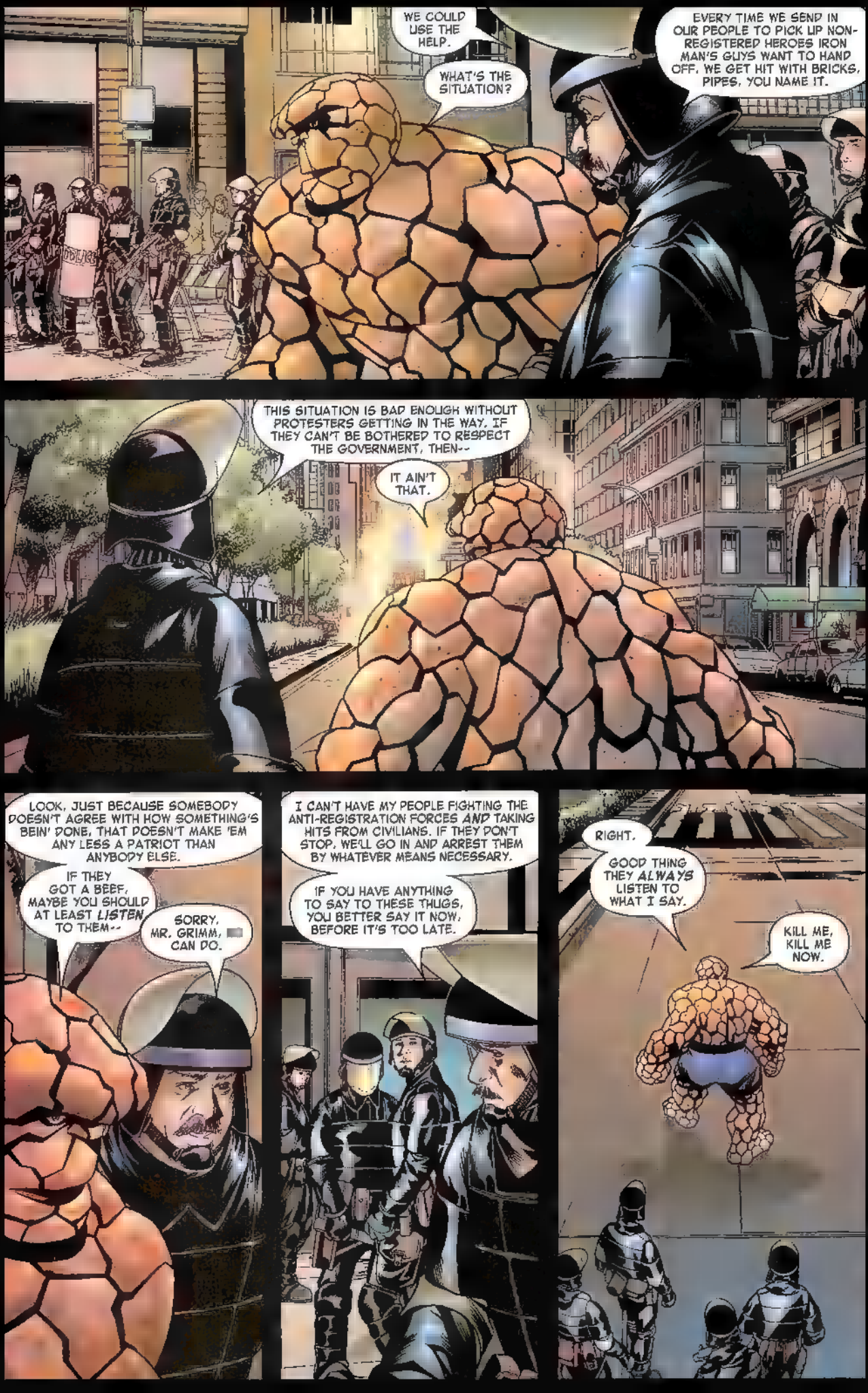
HELLO, BEN.
SUSIE, HEY, IS IT THAT TIME ALREADY?
LOOKS LIKE.
I APPRECIATE YOU STAYING HERE WITH JOHNNY WHILE I WAS--
NAH, HEY, IT'S THE SQUIRT, RIGHT? WE ALL GOTTA DO WHAT WE GOTTA DO, RIGHT?
SO HOW LONG *HAVE* I BEEN HERE, ANYWAY?
AN HOUR.
AN HOUR?
APPROXIMATELY, YES.
AN *HOUR?*
WELL... NUTS.
IT'S NOT THE TIME, IT'S THE SENTIMENT, AND I APPRECIATE IT, BEN.
BUT BEFORE YOU GO, ONE THING, ABOUT WHAT REED AND I WERE DISCUSSING--
WE'RE NOT GONNA GET IN A FIGHT, ARE WE?
NO, BEN, WE'RE NOT.


REED'S RIGHT WHEN HE SAYS THE COUNTRY IS TEARING ITSELF APART OVER THE ISSUE OF SUPER HERO REGISTRATION. BUT HE'S WRONG IN DECIDING TO GO AFTER ANYONE WHO DOESN'T SIGN UP. THAT'S NOT WHAT WE SHOULD BE DOING.
THEN WHAT DO *YOU* THINK WE SHOULD BE DOING, SUE? YOU WANNA TAKE UP ARMS AGAINST OUR OWN GOVERNMENT?
DISAGREEMENT ISN'T DISLOYALTY, BEN.
SOMETIMES THE MOST PATRIOTIC THING YOU CAN *DO* IN A DEMOCRACY IS DISAGREE. AND I--
--HAVE TO DO SOME SERIOUS THINKING ABOUT THIS, AND DO IT FAST.
MAYBE SO--
--BUT YOU DON'T GOTTA DO IT TONIGHT, SUSIE. YOU GOT MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO THINK ABOUT.
STARTING WITH JOHNNY.
TAKE CARE OF YERSELF, SUSIE. YOU NEED ANYTHING, JUST CALL.
I WILL, BEN. AND THANKS--
"--THANKS FOR EVERYTHING."
--WHERE HEROES ON EITHER SIDE OF THE REGISTRATION ACT HAVE BEEN LOCKED IN A FIERCE BATTLE FOR THE LAST SEVERAL HOURS--


--DECIMATING SEVERAL SQUARE BLOCKS IN THIS AREA. WE'VE HAD REPORTS THAT SEVERAL OF THOSE FIGHTING HAVE BEEN ADMITTED TO LOCAL HOSPITALS, ALONG WITH SOME CIVILIANS.
SO FAR, THE MEDIA HAS ENJOYED AN UNEASY TRUCE WITH BOTH SIDES, ALLOWING US TO COVER THIS STRUGGLE UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL--
--BUT APPARENTLY THAT TRUCE DOES NOT EXTEND TO OTHER GROUPS WHO HAVE BEEN CAUSING PROBLEMS FOR BOTH REPORTERS AND LOCAL POLICE BY RIOTING AGAINST REGISTRATION.
GETOUTTAHERE! WE DON'T WANT YOU JERKS AROUND HERE! BUG OFF!
DOWN WITH REGISTRATION! DOWN WITH REGISTRATION! REGISTRATION SUCKS, AND SO DO YOU!
WHILE POLICE MAY BE OUTGUNNED BY THE POWERFUL FORCES BATTLING IT OUT IN THE STREETS, THEY PLAN TO TAKE ACTION TO DEAL WITH RIOTS AND PROTESTERS--
OH, NO...
LYANCY St.
--WHEREVER THEY MAY BE FOUND.
IT NEVER ENDS...I SWEAR, IT NEVER FREAKING ENDS...
AND NOW, SPORTS!

TWENTY MINUTES LATER, JUST OUTSIDE YANCY STREET...
GIVE IT UP, SILVERCLAW! YOU'VE GOT TO REGISTER-- IT'S THE LAW!
NOT THE LAW OF MY COUNTRY! YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO DETAIN ME!
WE WERE FRIENDS, MS. MARVEL, FELLOW AVENGERS... HOW CAN YOU DO THIS TO ME?

DIOS MIO!
BEN GRIMM, YOU'RE JUST IN TIME.
WHAT'RE YOU JUST STANDING THERE FOR--
--HELP ME...
"THANKS FOR CHECKING IN, MR. GRIMM."


WE COULD USE THE HELP.
WHAT'S THE SITUATION?
EVERY TIME WE SEND IN OUR PEOPLE TO PICK UP NON-REGISTERED HEROES IRON MAN'S GUYS WANT TO HAND OFF. WE GET HIT WITH BRICKS, PIPES, YOU NAME IT.
THIS SITUATION IS BAD ENOUGH WITHOUT PROTESTERS GETTING IN THE WAY. IF THEY CAN'T BE BOTHERED TO RESPECT THE GOVERNMENT, THEN--
IT AIN'T THAT.
LOOK, JUST BECAUSE SOMEBODY DOESN'T AGREE WITH HOW SOMETHING'S BEIN' DONE, THAT DOESN'T MAKE 'EM ANY LESS A PATRIOT THAN ANYBODY ELSE.
IF THEY GOT A BEEF, MAYBE YOU SHOULD AT LEAST *LISTEN* TO THEM--
SORRY, MR. GRIMM, [redacted] CAN DO.
I CAN'T HAVE MY PEOPLE FIGHTING THE ANTI-REGISTRATION FORCES *AND* TAKING HITS FROM CIVILIANS. IF THEY DON'T STOP, WE'LL GO IN AND ARREST THEM BY WHATEVER MEANS NECESSARY.
IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO THESE THUGS, YOU BETTER SAY IT NOW, BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
RIGHT.
GOOD THING THEY *ALWAYS* LISTEN TO WHAT I SAY.
KILL ME, KILL ME NOW.

EVERY TIME I GET OUT--
--THEY PULL ME BACK IN.

WHAT THE SAM HILL IS WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE?!

KEEP IT DOWN, YA SCARED THE BABY!
WHO YOU CALLING A BABY?!
SHUT UP!
WHAT WAS THAT?
I THINK HE FARTED!
DIDJA SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CAT?
YEAH, MAN, LOOK, IT'S LIKE WATCHIN' WALLPAPER MEOW....
GET.
DOWN.
HERE.
NOW.
YO, B.
CEE.
WHAT'S UP? THOUGHT YOU'D BE HAPPY WE'RE TAKING ON THE FASCISTS.

FASCISTS? WHERE'D YOU PICK UP THAT ONE?
WE READ BOOKS, Y'KNOW.
HUH.
POP-UP BOOKS HAVE GOTTEN A LOT MORE SERIOUS SINCE I WAS A KID.
JERK!
WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?
BIG SHOT.
REAL FUNNY.
YOU'RE STANDING ON MY FOOT.
SHADDUP.
HERE KITTY, KITTY....
HOLD IT DOWN, OKAY?
LOOK, THESE OTHER HEROES, WE RESPECT 'EM, Y'KNOW?
NOTICE HE SAID OTHER HEROES.
THEY SHOULDN'T HAFTA GIVE UP THEIR NAMES FOR NOBODY. NOW, BECAUSE EVERYBODY KNOWS WHO YOU ARE ALREADY, I KNOW YOU GOT NOTHING TO RISK--
YEAH, I'M HEARIN' THAT A LOT LATELY.
--BUT EVEN YOU GOTTA SEE THIS IS WRONG, RIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW THAT THEY'RE WRONG.
ARE YOU SAYIN' THEY'RE RIGHT?
I'M NOT SAYIN' THAT EITHER.
SO WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

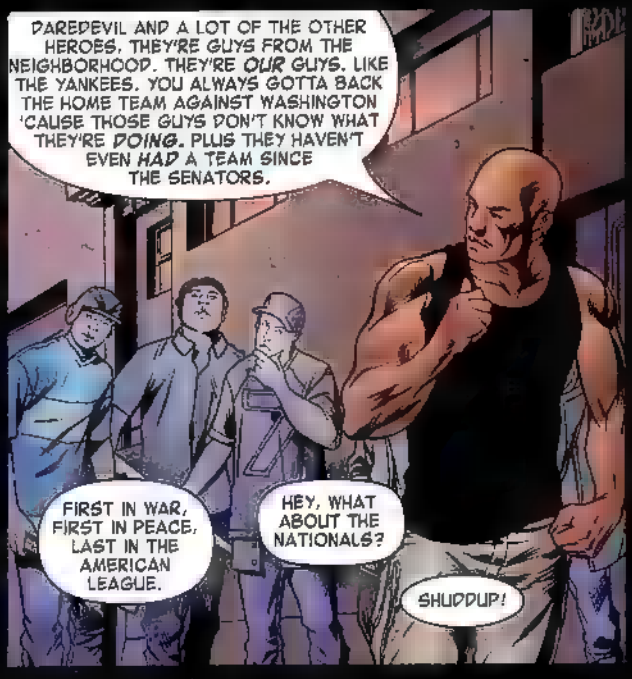
I'M SAYIN'... I'M *THINKIN'* ABOUT IT.
YOU'RE *THINKIN'* ABOUT IT?
I'M *THINKIN'* ABOUT IT.

YOU THINK THEY GOT THAT KINDA *TIME*, CHIEF?
HEY!
I'M JUST SAYIN'.

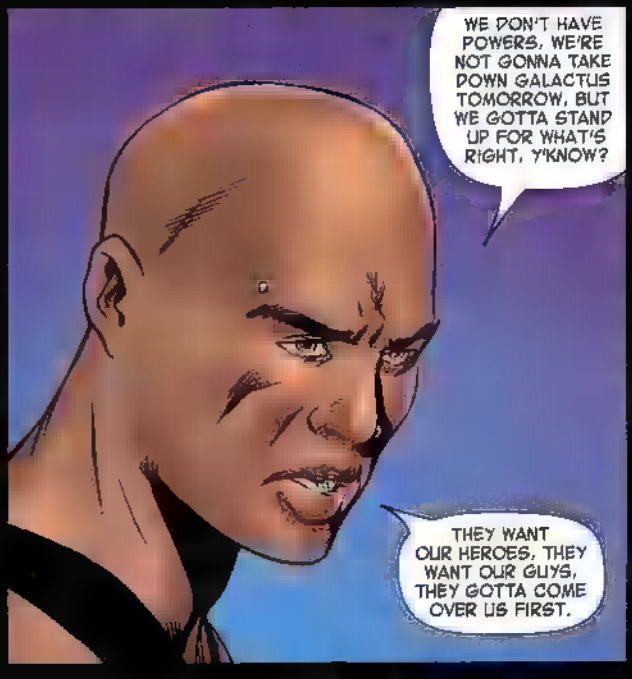
LOOK, AS A CONCEPT, DO I THINK IT'S WRONG? YEAH. BUT IT'S THE *LAW*. THERE'S *LOTS* OF LAWS I DON'T LIKE. THAT'S LIFE. I'M NOT BIG ON THE IDEA OF FIGHTING MY OWN GOVERNMENT.
ON THE OTHER HAND--

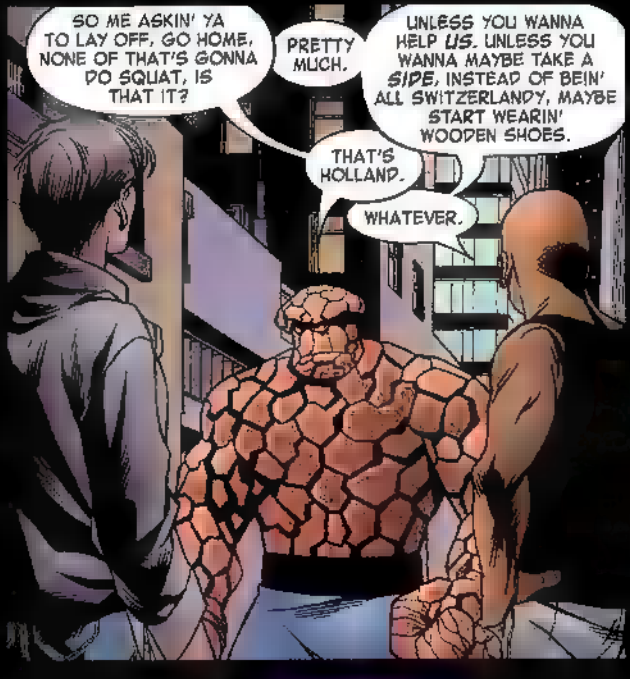
--'CAUSE I *DO* THINK THE LAW'S WRONG, EVEN THOUGH I WON'T *FIGHT* IT DOESN'T MEAN I *SUPPORT* IT. DOESN'T MEAN I'M GONNA HELP ROUND UP THE GUYS WHO *DO* WANT TO FIGHT IT.
LOOK, GRIMM--

--JUST 'CAUSE YOU'RE AS *BIG* AS SWITZERLAND DOESN'T MEAN YOU *ARE* SWITZERLAND. YOU CAN'T STICK AROUND AND BE NEUTRAL. YOU GOTTA TAKE A STAND HERE. SAME AS US.


DAREDEVIL AND A LOT OF THE OTHER HEROES, THEY'RE GUYS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD. THEY'RE *OUR* GUYS. LIKE THE YANKEES. YOU ALWAYS GOTTA BACK THE HOME TEAM AGAINST WASHINGTON 'CAUSE THOSE GUYS DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE *DOING*. PLUS THEY HAVEN'T EVEN *HAD* A TEAM SINCE THE SENATORS.
FIRST IN WAR, FIRST IN PEACE, LAST IN THE AMERICAN LEAGUE.
HEY, WHAT ABOUT THE NATIONALS?
SHUDDUP!

YA GET INTO THE MIDDLE OF THIS, YOU'RE GONNA GET ARRESTED.
WE KNOW.
YOU'RE GONNA GET HURT.
YEAH, WE PROBABLY WILL.


WE DON'T HAVE POWERS, WE'RE NOT GONNA TAKE DOWN GALACTUS TOMORROW, BUT WE GOTTA STAND UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT, Y'KNOW?
THEY WANT OUR HEROES, THEY WANT OUR GUYS, THEY GOTTA COME OVER US FIRST.


SO ME ASKIN' YA TO LAY OFF, GO HOME, NONE OF THAT'S GONNA DO SQUAT, IS THAT IT?
PRETTY MUCH.
UNLESS YOU WANNA HELP *US*. UNLESS YOU WANNA MAYBE TAKE A *SIDE*, INSTEAD OF BEIN' ALL SWITZERLANDY, MAYBE START WEARIN' WOODEN SHOES.
THAT'S HOLLAND.
WHATEVER.

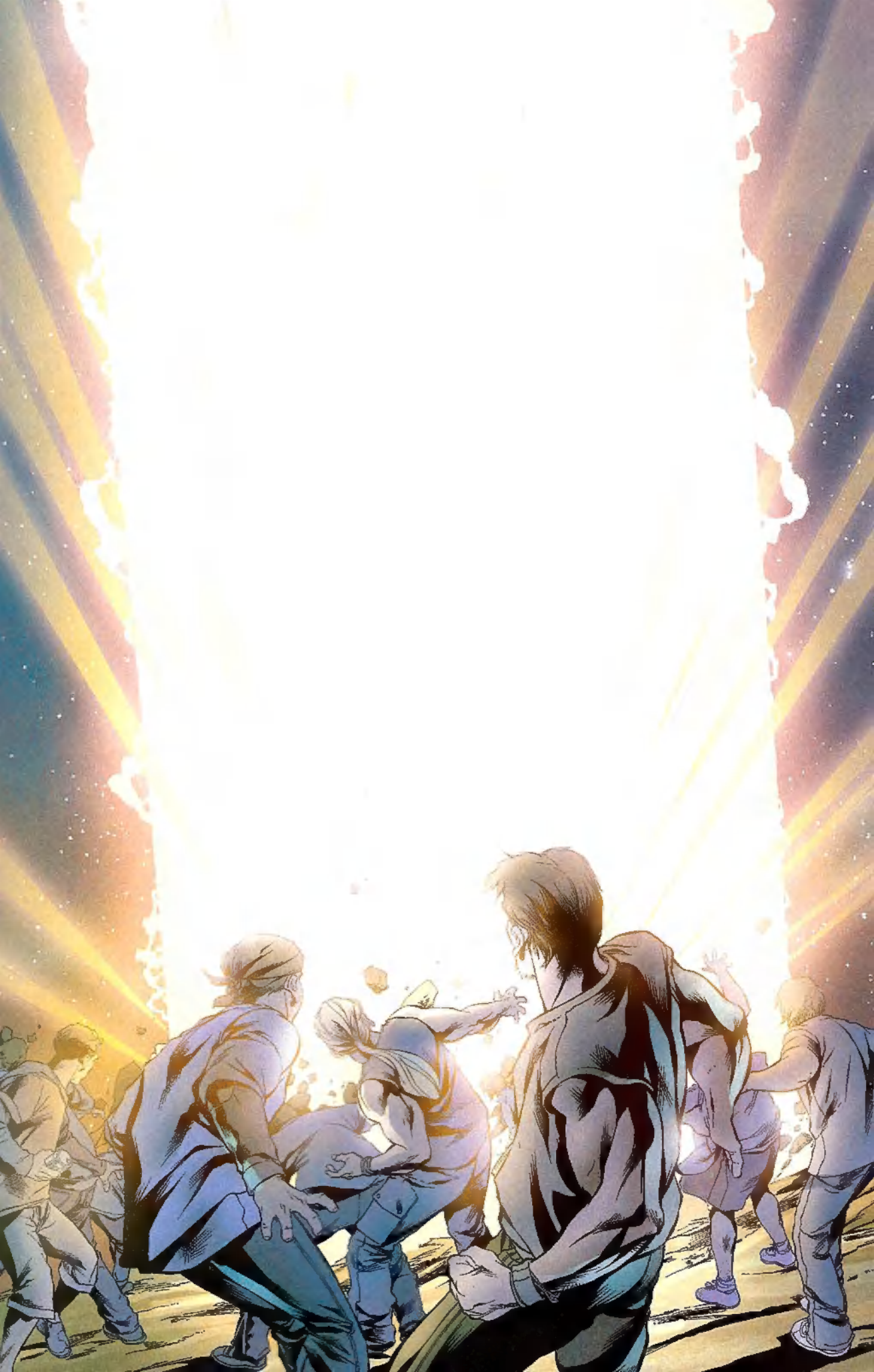
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
HEAR THAT? BIG ORANGE STEPHEN HAWKING SAYS HE'S GONNA *THINK* ABOUT IT.
WE'RE DOOMED.
GOT THAT RIGHT.
ANYBODY SEEN MY CAT?

FORGET HIM, WE GOTTA DO WHAT WE GOTTA DO. MOUSE GETTIN' THE INFO WE NEED?
RIGHT NOW.

--AND THE SECURITY VAN CARRYING THE HEROES TO PRISON WILL LEAVE TOMORROW AT TEN. THEIR ROUTE PUTS THEM GOING RIGHT BY YOUR TERRITORY.
PERFECT. Y[redacted] CAN HIT 'EM, DO WHAT WE CAN TO [redacted] OUR GUYS.
YOU'RE SURE THIS [redacted] SOLID?
ABSOLUTELY. GOOD LUCK WITH IT.
YEAH, WHATEVER.
YOU GET IT DONE, PHILLIP?
IT'S DONE, THINKER.
WE HAVE A GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY TO ELIMINATE [redacted] LARGE CHUNK OF THE COMPETITION BEFOR[redacted] THEY FIND SOME WAY TO WORK OUT THEIR DIFFERENCES.
AND NOW WE HAVE THE PERFECT FALL GUYS.
GET READY, PUPPET MASTER. I WANT US LOCKED AND LOADED IN ADVANCE. I'M GOING TO ENJOY THIS.
MEANWHILE...

...IN OKLAHOMA CITY...
...AND SOMEWHERE JUST EAST OF THERE....
NEXT!
C'MON...HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO TRY AND PICK UP A HAMMER AND FIGURE OUT YOU CAN'T DO IT?
EVERBODY WANTS MORE THAN ONE SHOT, JUST IN CASE, Y'KNOW? MAKES '[redacted] FEEL BETTER IF THEY GET A FEW TRIES.
YEAH, WELL, THIS AIN'T NO CHARITY.
C'MON, MOVE IT! BATTER UP!
HEY, WHAT THE...WHAT'S HE DOING?

HE'S CUTTIN' IN LINE IS WHAT HE'S DOING! HEY! GET OUTTA THERE!
GO STRAIGHTEN HIM OUT.
ME? I'M NOT LOSIN' MY PLACE IN LINE TO CHASE DOWN SOME JERK. BESIDES--
"--THE GUYS AT THE BOTTOM'LL TAKE CARE OF HIS BUTT."
LINE FORMS AT THE REAR, PAL.
YEAH, WE ALL GOTTA WAIT OUR TURN.
I DON'T--
--THINK SO.
HEY! STOP HIM! STOP HIM!
STOP--



...HOLY... CRAP...
...WHAT...

...WHO... WAS THAT?

TO BE CONTINUED...

Fantastic Four Fan Page

Hey there, cosmic crew!

A few months ago, I asked you to let us know your favorite of the FF's cosmic foes. And the winner, by only one vote (drum roll), was Galactus! For more planet-eating fun, you can check out LAST PLANET STANDING, in which Galactus is about to devour the earth! Our runner-up was Annihilus, who is currently wreaking havoc in the ANNIHILATION limited series. Here's a letter in support of the Living Death That Walks.

My favorite cosmic villain of the Fantastic Four is without a doubt Annihilus. He is cold-hearted, calculating, totally alien, vicious, and lacking of any compassion. He is entirely motivated by some inherent intense drive for power and revenge. What's not to like about him?

One of my early comic purchases was issue #140 of FANTASTIC FOUR in 1973. That issue was entitled "Annihilus Revealed" and included his origin. He started out as a weak little anthropod, alone and in continual fear for his life, until one day he discovers an ancient power source which he learns to harness. Over a period of 1000 years, he becomes the sweetheart that we know today. What a great story line.

Of all his characteristics, the quality which I have found most appealing about Annihilus is his deep loneliness. He is simply alone and isolated--geographically (or spatially), socially, and definitely emotionally. After a long day of menacing, torturing, and murdering, whom can he open up to?

With that said, I still could not help smiling when he got "what was coming to him" in issue #473, leading to his apparent demise. Regardless, what I liked most about that issue was the "little baby Annihilus" at the end of the story, giving hope for us to see Annihilus sometime again in the future. He is one of a kind, and a solid mix of evil and loneliness.

Jimmie Joe Carl
South Corning, New York

Speaking of evil and lonely super-villains...

I just finished reading FANTASTIC FOUR #537. The cover left me speechless, until I thought for a moment: Doom could have never lifted Thor's hammer. And based on Doom's history as a Marvel mainstay, he would have never come to the conclusion, even after the experience in hell, that he could lift the hammer. His character is too brilliant and familiar with his foes' abilities to react the way he did when he witnessed the hammer creating a rift between hell and the void. A better story would have had Doom attempting to use some incredible piece of equipment to absorb the mystic energies from the hammer, only to be stopped by Captain America or Beta Ray Bill. Why them you say? Both men have lifted the hammer of Thor. Bill is presently on earth. Why did he not sense the hammer's presence?

Captain America is a more believable character in this particular story because you introduced the military, who could not move this weapon, but he could have and wielded the hammer for a time or simply taken it back to Avengers or FF headquarters. You had me going though. Thanks for the "ride."

ThaTruth1023
Rochester, N.Y.

Dear Marvel,

This is my first time EVER writing to a comic's fan page. I have been a HUGE fan of the Fantastic Four since I was little. As a kid, Ben and Johnny were my favorite characters simply because they looked so cool. As I've gotten older however, I have come to grow a great respect for all of the characters. In fact, it is out of respect for a certain iron-clad character that I am contacting you. Dr. Doom is the greatest character in any comic, and I am ecstatic to see him back. I am a little shocked to see the way he returned however. The last time we saw Doom, he was not in Hell, but instead was in the "Ultimate Prison" that Reed made for him. At least, Doom's body was there. His consciousness died when Ben "died." His consciousness either returned to his body in prison, or it went to Hell. Either way, some may see this as a mistake; but I believe I've caught on to what is really going on.

Doom seemed to have to really strain to recall the events of his "escape" from "Hell." This is because his memories are fake ones implanted by Mephisto. Just recently in MK4, we saw that Nicolas Scratch was resurrected and then returned to Hell, where Mephisto spoke to him of bringing Hell to Earth. I feel that Mephisto has somehow returned Doom to Earth, but with false memories so that Doom will not know that he is simply a pawn of the Devil.

Even if I'm wrong, I know that something strange is going on here, and Doom is not himself. In closing, I just want to say the I'm really enjoying FANTASTIC FOUR, and I'm happy to see that you guys can still come up with the world's greatest stories for the World's Greatest Comics Magazine.

Mario Calandros
(via e-mail)

Hi Marvel,

I have been a big fan of the Fantastic Four for more than 30 years, never missing an issue. I even had some letters printed when I was a kid. Being such a big fan, it is kind of funny that what made me finally write in again, after all these years, was to complain.

You see I am a huge fan of Ben Grimm. Even my 5-year-old Daniel calls him Uncle Benjy. I just don't buy the fact that he could not lift Thor's hammer. If there was anybody in the Marvel Universe who could lift that hammer, it would have been Ben.

We are talking about the most noble and most worthy character in any comic universe. This is the guy who when he became rich, still works off his debt sweeping and taking out the trash for an old man. This is the guy who gave back to Yancy Street, the place where he grew up, by building a place for kids to hang out rather than getting into trouble on the streets, all while dedicating it to the memory of his dead brother. This is the guy who despite getting his butt kicked numerous times by the Hulk, still is the first one to jump up to keep him busy until Reed or someone can figure on how to stop him. This is the guy who puts on a fake smile so others won't worry over him, and cries himself to sleep because he looks like a monster. This is the guy that saved the Earth by hanging in there to fight the Champion of the Universe when nobody else, including Thor, proved worthy. He was even offered a rematch should he want one, due to his character, a prize offered to no one else in the universe. The examples of Ben's character are endless.

Ben was stood up for by Captain America when Batman called him a monster, saying he was the most human man he knows. Ben was even worthy enough that God himself gave him an audience. If God finds Ben worthy, how can Mjolnir not?

Why is Ben not lifting Mjolnir not a mistake? Simple...He did lift it. Ben just wanted to know, just like he said. Ben just isn't the type of guy to brag about being worthy enough to be able to lift it, there was just no reason to reveal that he could other than to show off. Keeping it to himself is what makes him worthy to begin with and what makes him...well, Ben.

Hope this explanation helps, and thanks for the many years of entertainment. Now and forever, Make Mine Marvel,

Frank Vieira
Salem, Massachusetts

Thanks for your thoughts, Frank. I think that whether or not Ben lifted the hammer is just going to be one of those things that we'll just never know for sure. But I agree--if anyone would be worthy, it would be our ever-loving blue-eyed pal.

I hope you all enjoyed the first issue of the FF's tie-in to CIVIL WAR. Major changes are coming up for Marvel's first family, so stay tuned!

Till next time,
Molly Lazer

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THE THING TAKES A STAND!

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